

The Semaphore

A Publication of the TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS

Issue 246

Summer 2024



**BARBARA SOLOMON,
ICON IN OUR MIDST**

KIDS CORNER



by Sarah Kliban
kids@thd.org

Welcome to Kids Corner! THD wants to hear from kids in the neighborhood! If you'd like to ask a question, or you're a kid and want to be interviewed, please contact us at kids@thd.org.



NAOMI MARTIN-DRAKELEE, 7

What is the weirdest thing you've ever eaten?

"An ant. We were infested by ants in our house, and there were so many. So, me and my brother did an experiment to see how ants tasted. It was spicy."

What's the best pizza in The City?

"The Pizza Shop. They make it the perfect temperature, and it's very crispy. They have really good flavors, but I think my favorite is tomato and garlic."

What is your perfect summer vacation?

"Going to Spain with all of my family to visit my cousins and grandparents. In Sotogrande. That's where I go every summer, and I love how my uncle cooks paella."

What does the mayor do?

"The mayor is in charge of the city and raises money to make new buildings. I'm pretty sure that's it."

What is your favorite place in San Francisco?

"Both of my houses. On the weekend, I get to have snacks when I want and it doesn't have to be lunchtime. Play in the garden or the mini pool area in my swimsuit. At the other house, we have really yummy food and I can Facetime my friends."

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Telegraph Hill
Dwellers!

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LEWIS BARZELAY, 9

What is the weirdest thing you've ever eaten?

"A type of gravy that was weird. It tasted like broccoli but cheese pizza on a scone. It was really weird."

What's the best pizza in The City?

"Hole in the Wall. You choose any of your toppings. A lot of people hate pineapple pizza, but I really like it. It's really calm and really good."

What is your perfect summer vacation?

"Camp Mather. It has a really big lake. The pool is good. All the different activities are really fun. The only thing is that the counselors party at night so they might be tired in the morning sometimes."

What does the mayor do?

"Is the mayor like the president? I hope they would help out with people who don't have a lot of money or enough food. But there's a war going on, and the mayor is giving money for weapons. I don't think we should support war."

What is your favorite place in San Francisco?

"I really love my house. I can chill there. I can play video games there. I play chess with my mom. Watching TV and movies is a lot of fun. I like getting my rest because sleep is very important."



WILLIAM VON EICHORN, 11

What is the weirdest thing you've ever eaten?

"French fries in cranberry sauce. I just felt like trying it. It was terrible. I stopped at one."

What's the best pizza in The City?

"Square Pie Guys in Ghirardelli Square. I get the

Vegan Cheese with Mushroom. It has a lot of sauce. You can take a bite and get a huge bite of everything."

What is your perfect summer vacation?

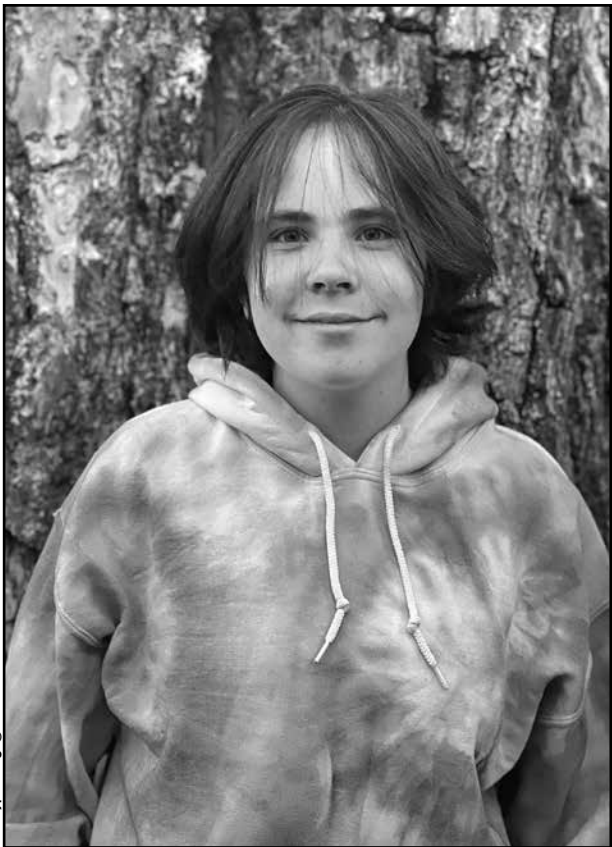
"Japan. Tokyo. Looking at all the tech. They have the bullet and maglev trains. Gaming systems. Special foods that they don't sell anywhere else. Like these peanut butter Oreos."

What does the mayor do?

"He's in charge of the city. Government. Laws about the city."

What is your favorite place in San Francisco?

"My house. I like playing video games in my room. I have three different consoles: Xbox, PlayStation, and computer. I sit at my desk. I'm getting a Razer chair."



RILEY NOBLE, 14

What is the weirdest thing you've ever eaten?

"I ate snails—or escargots. It did not taste very good. But I was little. My taste might have changed by now. I would probably try it again."

What's the best pizza in The City?

"Pizzahacker. I really like this one pizza called 'Over the Top.' It's kind of like a Margherita, but it has burrata."

What is your perfect summer vacation?

"Going to a summer camp with all of my friends. Swimming, arts and crafts—with people I already know. It would be in a hot place for the swimming but preferably a place that gets really cold at night."

What does the mayor do?

"Probably organizing meetings between different cities or meetings within the city. Educational stuff, financial stuff. I don't pay attention to anything revolving around politics. My entire family is really interested in it, so I'm not that inclined. Because my family talks about it so much that it's like...maybe you should talk about something else!"

What is your favorite place in San Francisco?

"The San Francisco Rock Project in the East Cut. It's an organization where there's a bunch of music teachers and different groups you can play music in. Rock music. I'm in some of the groups, and I take lessons there. I play the bass and the guitar."



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by Nick Ferris
President@thd.org

Hello THD! This is my first article as President, and let me start by saying how honored I am to serve Telegraph Hill Dwellers. Growing up on Telegraph Hill, I was always aware of THD and its significance. As many readers know, this organization has had tremendous impact over the years. Indeed, Telegraph Hill, North Beach, and much of San Francisco would not be what they are today without the tireless dedication of the many volunteer leaders who came before me. I hope to live up to THD's rich history, and I thank you for your trust in me.

Let me briefly share with you how I view THD, our opportunities, and what you can expect to see from us as the year unfolds. Simply put, I anticipate this year to be a very active one, filled with bustling committees, strong civic engagement, and more options than ever for members to participate—a year of growth.

Growth can take many forms. A priority for me is current and new member engagement. Our strength as an organization is our membership. We need to do a better job tapping into members' resources, brainpower, connections, and ideas.

My commitment to you is that we will hold more events this year than we have for each of the past five, and our committees will be more active than they have in the same time period. I can say this because I've been watching our board work incredibly hard year after year to improve our communications, operations, finances, and overall capacity to produce impact and results. I believe we are now ready to reap the rewards of all this hard work.

So, what does this mean for you?

We have 11 committees: Art & Culture, Budget, Communications, Membership, Oral History Project, Parks & Trees, Planning & Zoning, *The Semaphore*, Social & Programs, Transportation, and Waterfront.

Each committee will meet at least once per quarter, and many will meet once per month because of the bustling nature and amount of work needed.

Which one interests you? I urge you to reach out to me or the Chair of a committee, asking to be on its email list so you're notified of meetings.

Here are the 2024-2025 Committee Chairs.

- Art & Culture: Nanci Gaglio nanci.gaglio@thd.org
- Budget: Peter Stevens peter.stevens@thd.org
- Communications: Al Fontes al.fontes@thd.org
- Membership: Andy Katz THDmembership@gmail.com
- Oral History Project Manager: John Doxey oral-history@thd.org
- Parks & Trees: Mike Rothmann mike.rothmann@thd.org
- Planning & Zoning: Stan Hayes, Nancy Shanahan, & Mary Lipian PZ@thd.org
- The Semaphore*: Cap Caplan semaphore@thd.org
- Social & Programs (Dinners): Kristen Foley social@thd.org
- Social & Programs (Events): Greta Alexander and Kim Pendleton social@thd.org
- Transportation: Howard Wong howard.wong@thd.org
- Waterfront: Greg Chiampou greg.chiampou@thd.org

Meetings will typically happen in a cafe, at someone's house, or on zoom. The real work of THD takes place within these committees, and it's the easiest way to start getting involved. It's also a really fun way to meet new friends!

THD is already one of the larger neighborhood organizations in San Francisco. Our membership is our greatest strength, and this means we need to continue growing. Adding new neighbors to our community continues the process of introducing new ideas and energy and improving our capacity to serve the neighborhood.

My request to all reading this: Ask yourself, "Who among my friends are not members of THD? Who are passionate about their neighborhood? Who would benefit from getting involved?"

Gift them a membership. Bring them to an event. Introduce them to us. Indeed, I'd welcome the opportunity to grab a coffee together and discuss the neighborhood. North Beach/Telegraph Hill is the best neighborhood in San Francisco, and we need to get everyone involved because that takes work to preserve.

This is an election year, and San Francisco is at a crossroads. While THD as an organization cannot

endorse any candidate, I believe it's of paramount importance that we create opportunities to educate and inform our community on candidates running for office. We're a village within a city. We're a neighborhood where you walk into your favorite cafe or restaurant, and you're greeted by name. You can't walk more than a few blocks before bumping into someone you know. It's truly special, and we must not take this for granted.

We organized a debate for District 3 Supervisor on March 14th at the SF Italian Athletic Club, and we'll organize a follow-up debate closer to the election. I hope we can help sponsor a mayoral debate. Nothing yet is planned, but I see this as our responsibility.

Again, how grateful I am to serve as President of the Telegraph Hill Dwellers. I have learned so much from those who came before me, and, specifically, I'd like to call out past presidents Stan Hayes, Al Fontes, and Judy Irving. I have served on the board and as Treasurer under each of them. They all have different styles and strengths. What has been consistent is their high degree of integrity, work ethic, and passion for our home—magnetic and inspiring. There are many others I have learned from during my time at THD, and I look forward to much more.

I am excited to work with such a strong Board of Directors. I think it's going to be a great year ahead for the Telegraph Hill Dwellers.

Onwards and upwards!



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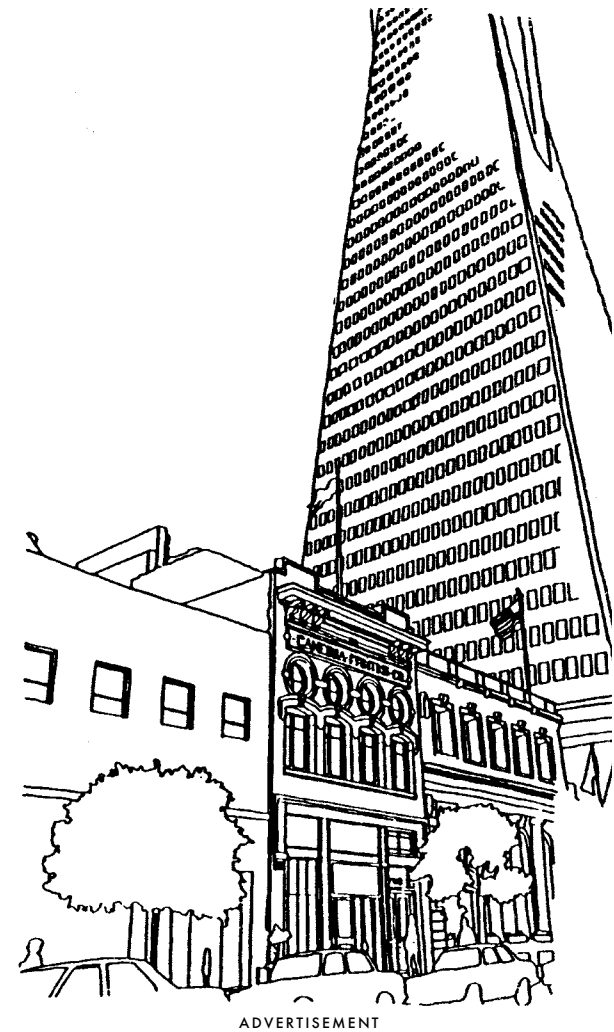
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— CELLPHONE CHRONICLES, PART 3 —

ARTISTS COLLABORATE ON A NEW BOOK

by Judy Irving

The *Book of Cells – Artists Respond to Cellphone Mania* is a new book by Anne Whiteside and seven other Bay Area women artists that we hope to publish soon. I first met Anne at the Live Worms Gallery on Grant Avenue at her show of cellphone sculptures, and I was hooked.

Around the same time, Jonathan Haidt published a ground-breaking book that quickly became a *New York Times* bestseller entitled *The Anxious Generation*, about Gen Z youth (born after 1995) who have never experienced life without phones and social media.

Anne used some quotations from Haidt's book, and from Anna Lembke's *Dopamine Nation*, interspersed with her whimsical, ironic, funny, thought-provoking sculptures, which she made by filling cellphone frames with entirely new material.

When Haidt's book was first published, stencils appeared on the sidewalk on Columbus Avenue in North Beach next to the children's playground, urging that we ban cellphones in schools, prohibit social media before age 16, stop telling children to "stay safe," and instead encourage them to get outside, take risks, and develop responsibility by experiencing the real world. When I heard about the stencils, I ran over and took pictures, a couple of which are in *The Book of Cells*, along with excerpts from my first *Semaphore* cellphone column (Fall 2023 issue).



Sleep mode. © ANNE WHITESIDE

Artists' Backgrounds

After a lifetime of teaching at City College, Anne Whiteside got a Ph.D. in Educational Linguistics and taught Maya-speakers in Yucatan. As an artist, she works on multimedia sculpture, painting, and encaustic (painting with hot wax).

Here are some excerpts from her Artist's Statement, which show how she came to cellphones from a much



Doom scroller. © ANNE WHITESIDE



Book of Cells artists. © ANNE WHITESIDE



Mobile phone. © KIM COLLET

older and slightly less addictive screen.

"I'm always trying to find ways to take back some of the imaginative space occupied by technology. I realized, years ago, that television is a kind of surrogate fire. We sit around in the evening looking at this glowing thing, very ancient in our primitive brain.

"Corporations have taken advantage of this to invade our private spaces and sell us unnecessary things. Now it's cell phones that occupy our minds, hands, and loving gaze. With every click, we sell a piece of ourselves. Can we transform these beautifully-designed but cold objects into something warm and tactile, concrete?

"The older I get, the closer I feel to the cellularity in plants; we all have cell structures. For my first phone I made a screen out of wood with a transfer print of a fern and nonsense text on it. I'm drawn to European Dada artists, who, in response to the horrors of WWI, made nonsense images. In a world gone mad, these artists found it liberating to point out absurdity, to poke fun at the status quo.

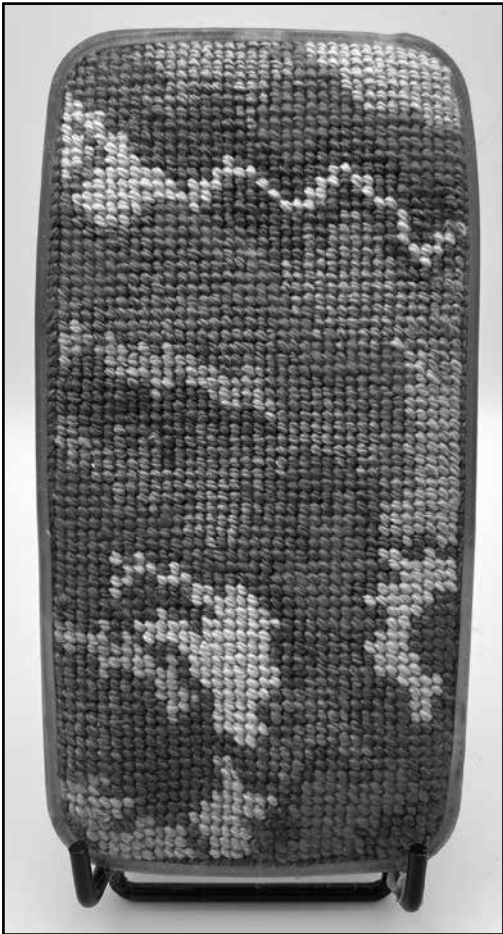
"Now we're in another kind of mess, sucked into a



Flipflop phones. © KIM COLLET

virtual reality that isolates us and deprives us of touch and smell. So I made phones out of tactile stuff like fur and plaster, which has something very human about it. I also played around with tech words like 'icon,' 'window,' 'scroll,' words that used to mean other things, and with 'texting' as a verb. Inspired by jazz, I invited a group of artists to improvise on their own themes."

The other artists who contributed photos, facts, and sculptures to *The Book of Cells* are all friends of Anne's: Kim Collet works with watercolor, sculpture, calligraphy, and mosaic. Ellen Rosenthal is a photographer and Spanish interpreter, who also plays the jazz bass. Dianne Platner paints portraits and landscapes, builds site specific installations, and makes books. Consuelo Faust Anderson is a dancer and choreographer and is the founder of Rhythm & Motion. Sheila Balter is an actor, director, and core company member of Word for Word Performing Arts Company. Brooke Holve works with calligraphy, printmaking, digital technology, and poetry. And I'm a documentary filmmaker. Here are some examples of how we all "respond to cellphone mania." Enjoy!



Touch screen. © CONSUELO FAUST ANDERSON



Bye-bye phone. © SHEILA BALTER

PS: I visited Kells, Ireland in late June to screen *Wild Parrots* and *Cold Refuge* at the Hinterland Festival and while there, paid a visit to the Book of Kells, the first "illuminated manuscript," referenced in the Book of Cells. Unfortunately for me, the audio tour of the exhibit was only accessible via cell phone!



DISTRICT 3 SUPERVISOR'S REPORT

by Supervisor Aaron Peskin
aaron.peskin@sfgov.org

Last summer, I partnered with the mayor to pass legislation to allow for more housing in the northeast waterfront through our joint Downtown Adaptive Reuse legislation. It was crafted in partnership with the Planning Department and City Attorney's office to allow for denser residential and mixed-use development without raising height limits along the northeast waterfront.

Unfortunately, developers and our mayor lobbied the state legislature to pass state legislation that would allow for "density bonus double-dipping," which perversely led to three supersized luxury condo towers, each more than 200 feet tall, being proposed along the northeast waterfront. The ink on the latest state developer loophole was barely dry before one of those local development proposals was submitted by billionaire Michael Moritz (and Angus McCarthy, the former head of the Building Inspection Commission) to tear down a historic building at 1088 Sansome Street in a 65-foot historic zone and replace it with a 267-foot high rise at the base of Telegraph Hill—that would be 60 feet taller than Coit Tower!

I moved quickly in partnership with the Planning Department to tweak this loophole by restoring the original zoning in two key historic districts covering a handful of city blocks on the waterfront that date from the Gold Rush. Drafted by the City Attorney's office, forwarded unanimously by the mayor's Planning Commission after being recommended by her Planning Director and adopted by eight members of the Board of Supervisors, this legislation still incentivizes resi-

DENSITY DONE RIGHT: WE CAN BE PRO-HOUSING & PRO-NEIGHBORHOOD

dential development in our historic waterfront—with-out destroying what makes it so special. Nonetheless, Mayor Breed vetoed the legislation—but with the help of thousands of San Franciscans and District 3 residents, the Board of Supervisors overrode her veto!

Unfortunately, Senator Scott Weiner, Mayor London Breed, and their well-funded YIMBY backers used this as another opportunity to slander community planning as "anti-housing" and rolled out an extreme citywide upzoning plan that guts our neighborhood planning process for financial and political gain. Their radical "my way or the highway" approach has essentially eliminated neighborhood planning citywide, as well as any reasonable level of community review.

I'm proud to represent the densest neighborhoods in San Francisco and to have presided over a wide array of significant upzonings by encouraging common-sense and community-led planning. By working with the community instead of against our neighborhoods, by listening to working families and seniors and tenants and small businesses, we furthered a plan for the City's future that has taken the form of complete neighborhoods from Hayes Valley to Mission Bay and Potrero Hill.

In addition, I'm proud to have made affordability a centerpiece of my neighborhood planning work, including doing the heavy lifting to secure hundreds of millions of dollars in affordable housing bonds and negotiating for higher levels of affordability. The Board of Supervisors will soon vote on my latest proposal to finance middle-income workforce housing through the issuance of tax-exempt revenue bonds that don't raise taxes. I've also moved legislation to protect our beloved small businesses and ensure that they are not displaced because of development.

For Mayor Breed and Senator Weiner to double-down on their radical "Truthiness" that community planning is somehow anti-housing only serves to erode public confidence in our entire concept of neighborhood planning, which has delivered affordable housing, neighborhood parks, and transit infrastructure for thousands of San Franciscans.

Their self-serving, developer-driven rhetoric undercuts the reality that we can be pro-housing AND pro-neighborhood.

"Who Are the People in Your Neighborhood?" Hint: Look Under the AstroTurf and Follow the Money.

I'll have more updates on the handful of ballot measures that I've authored in whole or in part for the November 5th ballot in the lead-up to the election. In the meantime, I wanted to shine some light on a troubling and well-funded attack on San Francisco's democracy and public engagement.

Many of you may have read about the increasing power consolidation of a network of intertwined Astroturf groups like TogetherSF, GrowSF, and Neighbors for a Better San Francisco. While they initially announced their entry into San Francisco as "community groups" advocating for all the things that most of us subscribe to—public safety, housing, good schools, and solutions to homelessness—their true purpose, ethical challenges, and questionable leadership have only recently become much more public.

While GrowSF's founder, Garry Tan, was publicly calling for the death of elected officials (including me) and their loved ones, it belied his even more insidious work behind the scenes, fundraising and soliciting issues platforms from some of the most extremist conspiracy theorist billionaires currently guiding the ultra-right discourse nationwide. Neighbors for a Better SF's multi-million-dollar war chest is being predominantly funded by extremist billionaire William Oberndorf, who has donated more than \$13 million to anti-choice, anti-labor Republicans like Mitch McConnell and JD Vance. Mr. Oberndorf and Neighbors for a Better San Francisco opted to keep on their Director, Jay Jessie Cheng, even after revelations surfaced that he had stepped down from a previous stint on the UC Board of Regents after being arrested for sexual assault allegations, in addition to assertions of illegally coordinating with multiple mayoral campaigns in violation of campaign laws. Jay Cheng's current spouse, Kanishka Cheng, a former staff member to Mayor Breed, runs TogetherSF, funded by the aforementioned billionaire venture capitalist Michael Moritz. TogetherSF started out as a non-profit supporting neighborhood cleanups citywide—only to take neighbors' private RSVP information and funnel it into the organization's Political Action Committee for their own political purposes. Believe it or not, Mr. Moritz and many of these funders are the same wealthy power brokers buying up more than \$700 million of land in Solano County to create their own super-elite private city.

Now TogetherSF has spent more than \$1 million to gather enough signatures to qualify a ballot measure on this November's ballot that would take a meat ax to the City's Commission system, arbitrarily eliminating many of the most effective public oversight bodies like the Library Commission, Arts Commission, and the Public Health Commission and remove sensible checks and balances and oversight roles from the remaining commissions.

Beware: Before you scan a QR code at a neighborhood cleanup or block party table, make sure to read the fine print. The people behind these seemingly organic and altruistic neighborhood community groups are nothing more than political power brokers trying to dismantle unilaterally our City's democratic oversight system. They are counting on San Franciscans being too overwhelmed and inundated with propaganda to see through their money. I hope you will visit The Phoenix Project at phoenixprojectnow.com to be informed about the forces investing millions into reshaping San Francisco from the inside out.

See you in the neighborhood,
Aaron



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THD AT THE NORTH BEACH FESTIVAL 2024

by Greg Giachino
greg.giachino@thd.org

Well, it's finally summer. As we bid adieu to spring and embrace the summer, we had the pleasure of participating in the 70th Annual North Beach Festival over Father's Day Weekend. Our booth, located along Grant Avenue between Union and Green Streets, provided the perfect setting to meet and recruit new members. It also served as a hub for our current members and old friends, offering a wonderful opportunity to catch up and share experiences.

This year, since our regular booth was fully staffed by our hard-working board members, we decided to help the North Beach Business Association (NBBA) operate a beer booth on Grant Avenue and a wine garden at Vallejo Street and Columbus Avenue. Amazingly, after a call (email) to our membership, we received more than 20 volunteers to assist our cause. We want to make sure to shout out to all of those who were kind enough to give their time to support THD and NBBA. We very much appreciate it. We hope you enjoyed yourselves and met new neighbors in the process.



© GREG GIACHINO

As in other years, we sold tee shirts, hoodies, both zippered and unzipped, and pullover crew-neck sweatshirts that read 'North Beach.' We added a new edition of a long-sleeve black tee shirt with white lettering that reads 'Telegraph Hill Dwellers.' Of course, many of you know that this isn't exactly a new item, but during the pandemic years, Telegraph Hill Dwellers shirts were not in our selling arsenal. If you don't have a "Dwellers" shirt and want one, they are \$30, and we can arrange to get one to you. For that matter, if you want one of the other tee shirts, sweatshirts, or hoodies, please contact us at hello@thd.org. Their prices do vary. We also sold Telegraph Hill books and gave away some parrot swizzle sticks. I think a few Coit Tower glasses were sold as well.

Remember—since we are a community-based, membership-funded organization and not a dark money one, we rely on sales from the Fair and membership dues to keep THD going. This year, we didn't sell as many sweatshirts as last year because the weather blessed us with being relatively warm. However, we sold a fair amount, given the lower demand. We also picked up about 30 new members and made a lot of new friends discussing the issues of the neighborhood.

Interestingly, it appears that a lot of people are unaware of what is happening in terms of what some of our more donor-driven politicians are proposing for our neighborhood and city at large. However, that can be left out for other conversations.

Finally, I would like to add a special thank you to former THD presidents Al Fontes and Stan Hayes for their help in organizing THD's participation. Thank you to current president Nick Ferris, along with the other board members, for making this a successful endeavor. We could not have done this without you.

Until next year.



© DAVID LIPKIN



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RESTAURANT NEWS

Semaphore writer Nancy Lewis loved the assignment of telling Yarsa's background story and dining there to do so. What are your favorite places to enjoy a meal this summer? Let us know, so you can sing their praises on these pages.

—Cap Caplan, Editor, semaphore@thd.org

YARSA NEPALESE CUISINE



by Nancy Lewis

On February 1, 2020, Kamal Kandel opened his restaurant, Yarsa Nepalese Cuisine, at 1310 Grant Avenue in North Beach, naming it after his home country of Nepal.

Six weeks later, San Francisco was in lockdown in reaction to the spread of COVID 19.

Today, Yarsa is thriving. As a fan and frequent diner, I've often wondered how the restaurant survived the pandemic, when so many other establishments failed. I sat down with Kamal to ask about it.

Growing up in Nepal, Kamal studied to become a paramedic. While loving the work, he wanted more opportunities to better himself financially and continue his education. Kamal's brother, living in Texas, encouraged him to move there.

Kamal continued taking paramedic classes but quickly realized that the heat of Texas was too much for someone who'd grown up in the Himalayan Mountains. He decided to join relatives in the Bay Area, working and taking advantage of classes at various institutions.

In 2012, he landed a job as a server at the Michelin-starred Taj Campton Place Restaurant in San Francisco. When the restaurant was quiet, Kamal volunteered to work in the kitchen, filling in wherever help was needed. He learned more about cooking and kitchen management.

Kamal and his cousin Arjun Kandel, a chef at an Indian restaurant called Little Delhi, decided that together they wanted to open a Nepalese/Himalayan restaurant in San Francisco. Thus, Yarsa Nepalese Cuisine was born.

Kamal told me he felt confident about starting the new venture. He still had business connections in the City. And his former customers at Taj Campton Place were happy to offer their support when they learned of his new restaurant.



MoMo (homemade Nepalese dumplings). (COURTESY KAMAL KANDEL)

As soon as Yarsa began serving customers, it quickly developed a following. Within the first days of the lockdown, however, Yarsa's staff left, afraid of contracting COVID.

So, how was Yarsa to continue? Kamal and his family ran the restaurant by themselves, offering only takeout meals. Then Kamal was contacted by North Beach Neighbors, the organization volunteering to deliver orders.

I've come to believe that Yarsa has survived and thrived because of Kamal, his family, hard work, and his

ability to work with people to solve problems. He credits community efforts in helping the restaurant stay alive. Kamal loves knowing his neighbors and being a part of the North Beach community. He shares and donates meals whenever he can. Kamal is also proud of his work in the 12,000 strong Nepalese/Himalayan community.

Kamal recently opened two other restaurants: Bayleaf, an Indian and Himalayan Restaurant in Oakland, and Sewa Indian and Nepalese Cuisine in San Francisco's Inner Richmond.

I asked Kamal about the differences between Indian and Nepalese/Himalayan food. Nepalese food, he told me, centers on dumplings, noodles, and a lentil-and-rice staple called 'dal bhat.' Most food is steamed with a little dairy or oil and is flavorful and savory but not hot. Indian food, by contrast, uses a variety of spices and can be quite hot.

The menu at Yarsa includes several different curry dishes, including Himalayan Ginger Garlic Curry, the traditional dish of Nepal. For all curries, patrons can choose their proteins, such as paneer, tofu, duck, lamb, or fish. (Kamal offers salmon and shrimp, while in Nepal, local fish is used.)

While my favorite meal at Yarsa has been Sag Paneer with rice and naan, working on this article has made me realize there is much more to try at this neighborhood gem.

Yarsa offers a catering service in addition to in-house dining, takeout, and delivery.

YARSA NEPALESE CUISINE

1310 Grant Avenue, North Beach
Reservations: (415) 926-5082

yarsanepalesecuisine@gmail.com

Lunch: Tuesday - Friday 10.30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Dinner: Tuesday - Friday 4.30 - 10 p.m.

Saturday & Sunday 10.30 a.m. - 10 p.m.



Various Nepalese delicacies. (COURTESY KAMAL KANDEL)



PLANNING & ZONING REPORT

by Stan Hayes, Nancy Shanahan, and Mary Lipian,
Committee Co-Chairs
PZ@thd.org

Thanks to State Senator Scott Wiener and his YIMBY allies in Sacramento, state legislation requires San Francisco to amend its Planning Code to allow developers to build new market-rate housing without community input or public review by the Planning Commission. The City is supposed to set objective standards for what is “acceptable” design, and then planners are expected to stamp any permits that meet the parameters.

Unintended Consequences

The Planning Commission recently held a hearing on the latest zoning amendments to implement the General Plan’s Housing Element in compliance with state requirements. In addition to proposed increases in allowable building heights and the elimination of density controls, the Planning staff presented draft “Objective Design Standards.” (See the next item in this report.)

THD spoke at the hearing, cautioning Planning Commissioners to beware of unintended consequences. Things that somehow just don’t turn out the way we expect. For example, the unintended consequences of the proposed upzoning of a major swath of the City, by-right approval of 4- and 6-plexes on thousands of single-family lots, density decontrol using form-based zoning in much of the City, and now newly proposed objective design standards that could make 6+ story buildings the new city-wide standard. All of these overlaid by State Density Bonus law and the collective weight of hundreds of new housing laws adopted by the Legislature over the past several years.

Lots of moving parts. Does the City understand how they all fit together? Without unintended consequences? Well, we don’t have to guess. Some of those consequences are happening now, right here in our own neighborhood.

As shown in Figure 1—See also the President’s column in the last issue of *The Semaphore*—we have a stark example on Sansome Street: three proposed oversized luxury towers at the foot of Telegraph Hill, all located in a historic district. Perhaps you read the article about them by John King in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the title saying it all: “Developers want a tower taller than Telegraph Hill—next to Telegraph Hill. It’s not a good idea.”

The shortest building (875 Sansome) is more than twice its zoned height limit. The tallest two buildings (955 Sansome and 1088 Sansome) are both more than *three times* their height limits. The tallest of these, at 955 Sansome, is taller than Telegraph Hill, super-sized by the developer by combining form-based density decontrol with the State Density Bonus.

Here’s the math. The lot at 955 Sansome as recently as the latter part of last year had a numerically-based limit of 24 units. Changing from numerical limits to density-decontrolled form-based limits allowed the developer nearly to triple this to 66 units. All because of an inadvertent and now-corrected temporary lapse

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

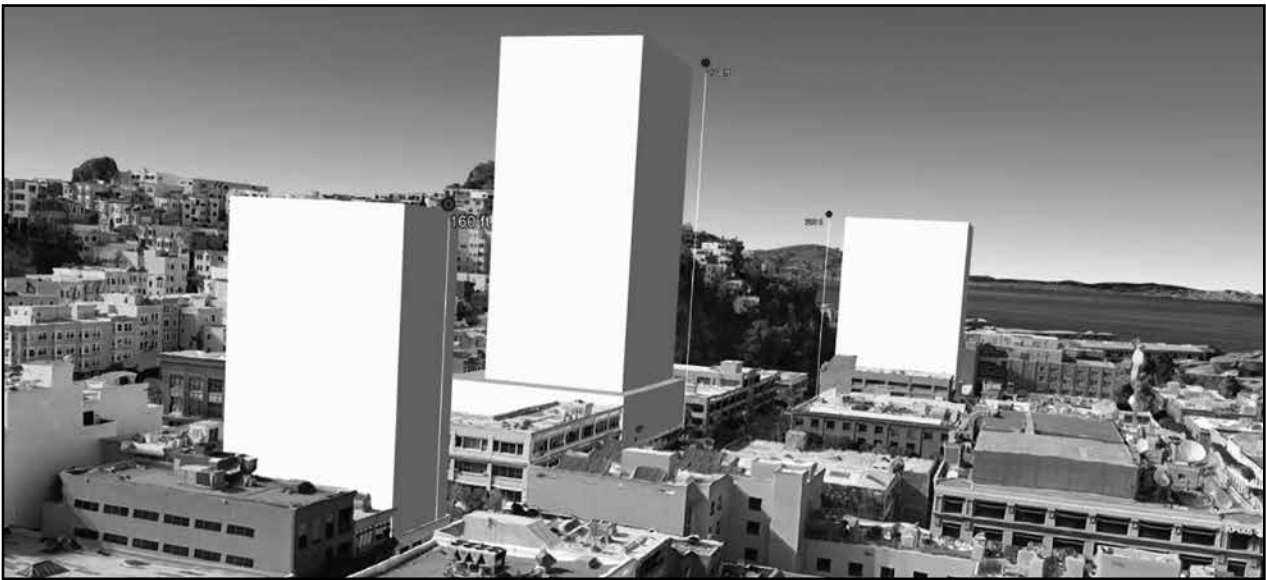


Figure 1. Three proposed high-rise towers (left to right – 875 Sansome, 955 Sansome, and 1088 Sansome).

of a decades-long code provision in a single table of the municipal planning code. Then, when supercharged by a 100% State Density Bonus, the number of units doubled to 132, and the height of the building soared to more than three times its height limit.

We asked the Planning Commission. We’ll ask it again here: Is this what we expected? Is this what we wanted? If not, we cannot let unintended consequences do irreparable damage to our City and the neighborhoods that we all love.

San Francisco is a world-class city, filled with smart world-class people. We can’t let the debate become housing versus our cherished neighborhoods. We can and should have both.

Objective Design Standards

Under the California Housing Accountability Act, local jurisdictions cannot use “personal or subjective judgment” in determining whether a project can be approved or denied. Proposed projects subject to the Act, instead, must meet locally adopted “objective” standards. In the past, the Planning Department had used subjective guidelines (e.g., the Residential Design Guidelines and the Urban Design Guidelines) that “considered immediate context in reviewing the appropriateness of a proposed development’s siting, size, programming, and design.” Planning staff envision that Objective Design Standards ultimately will replace these subjective guidelines.

In the same Planning Commission hearing as mentioned in the last item, Planning staff presented draft standards to apply to midrise housing developments (e.g., 65 ft to 85 ft tall, or 6-8 stories), large sites (e.g., greater than one acre), and sites allowing tall buildings (>85 ft). Figure 2 from the draft standards illustrates a streetscape that Planning views as compliant with the standards.

The draft standards consist of Site Design standards (large sites, rear yard, front setbacks, rear and side setbacks, tall buildings, modulation, and light wells and side setbacks) and Architecture standards (façade articulation, commercial ground floor, residential ground floor, non-active frontages, blind walls, fenestration, lobby entries, garage entries, and materials).

We are deeply concerned about these standards for many reasons, including those set forth by Tim Redmond in a June 2, 2024 *48 Hills* article: “New upzoning and ‘objective design’ rules could lead to small

business displacement.” The article notes that these standards will set “standards for what is acceptable design, and then planners are supposed to stamp any permits that meeting the parameters.” Concerning the impact on small businesses, Mr. Redmond points out:

“The problem is that the city’s upzoning, combined with the state’s Density Bonus program, will make almost every lot on, say, Clement Street far more valuable to speculators. Investors can buy lots with a small business tenant and a few housing units above, demolish the existing building, and put up much larger structures with many more high-end units—and the existing small business will be gone.”

We are also concerned at the loss of public notice and input and the likelihood of a one-size-fits-all approach being applied to what should be a much more nuanced one that more accurately reflects the diversity, scale, and character of San Francisco’s neighborhoods.

CCDC Affordable Senior Housing

The Chinatown Community Development Center (CCDC) is seeking to develop a 15-story, 100% affordable, senior housing project with 175 units, consisting of 124 studio units, 50 one-bedroom units, and one two-bedroom unit occupied by the manager. Currently zoned for 65 feet, the project proposes to use the State Density Bonus for 100% affordable housing to reach 155 ft (to the top of the roof slab). The project would be located on parcels at 758 and 772 Pacific Avenue. Figure 3 shows a rendering of the proposed building.

CCDC staff presented the project to THD’s Planning & Zoning Committee. While we understood at the meeting that detailed project plans were still being developed, CCDC outlined the project concept. Based on the presentation, we welcome the project, as we have other CCDC affordable housing projects such as the Broadway-Sansome Apartments and the Broadway Family Apartments.

We understand that CCDC has recently submitted a project application and is conducting additional analytical and massing studies. We look forward to working with CCDC as it further develops its massing studies and prepares detailed plans. We will keep THD members posted as review of the project proceeds.

To join, or to get information from, the THD Planning & Zoning Committee, just send an email to PZ@thd.org.



Figure 2. Example streetscape illustrating compliance with draft Objective Design Standards. (excerpt from Planning Department draft)



Figure 3. Proposed massing of proposed CCDC project at 758-772 Pacific.

BARBARA STAUFFACHER SOLOMON

by Romalyn Schmaltz

The cultural architecture of North Beach and Telegraph Hill suffered a profound, seismic shift on May 7, 2024, with the passing of 95-year-old Barbara “Bobbie” Stauffacher Solomon. A driven artist wedded to her work, Bobbie might have flown under the radar as a neighbor, belying her monumental, black-booted footprint left firmly in the design universe. She was a pioneer and leading exponent of “Supergraphics,” an architectural-scale art form infusing Swiss modernism with a California flair, and, with the publication of her book *Green Architecture and the Agrarian Garden*, deeply influenced a generation of landscape architects. In addition, Bobbie played a substantial role in the introduction of the clean, now-ubiquitous Helvetica typeface into this country.

A stroll along a City street might deliver Victorians strung together in blocks like pearls punctuated by the odd Edwardian nugget, a necklace of San Francisco-only charm varied more by paint color than architectural style. We don’t see much, as the stroll alone fails to reveal the lives behind the pastel presentation, and that’s where neighbors come in, opening doors to the stories unseen.

So, it was my fortune to sit down with Bobbie’s adjacent neighbors of several decades, Cap Caplan and her partner George Schumm, to talk about our famous designer denizen not enough of us knew lived

under their noses. These are the intimate conversations I die for when telling the story of a long life, and George—who’d published a review of Bobbie’s recent installation/exhibit *Strips of Stripes* and *KLEE + BSS* in *The Semaphore’s* Fall 2023 issue—was generous with his insights into the extraordinary life of a neighbor I never even knew I had.

Née Barbara Ethel Levé on December 5, 1928 and raised in the Marina, Bobbie’s life was a dizzying yet Swiss-orderly orrery of inter-orbital and colliding talents: You had Planet Dancer and Painter, Planet Designer, and Planet Architect, with many moons dedicated to publishing, linguistics, philosophy, and history—with a giant sun in the marriage of architecture and design/typographic rebellion.

She held in utter disdain the paternalism she saw in the history of (Western) art and the games the art world plays—and had no patience for any of it. Bobbie’s design work was strictly business, a way to pay the bills.

While still in high school, she meets Frank Stauffacher, an experimental filmmaker and the love of her life. They would marry and have a daughter, Chloe. Six years in, Frank dies of a brain tumor, leaving her with a young child and mother to support. No one is going to pay Bobbie to be a “painter.” But billed as a “graphic designer,” she reasons, she’ll be paid like an architect.

Off to Basel, Switzerland, mother and child in tow, where Bobbie enrolls in the Art Institute and falls under the tutelage of Armin Hofmann, renowned graphic designer and promoter of the Swiss modernist style.

Upon the family’s return to San Francisco in 1962, Bobbie opens her own design studio, an audacious move for a woman in those days. For her first commission, designing brochure covers for SFMOMA (then the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art), Bobbie is given *carte blanche* provided only that she use one color per cover and the cheapest paper.

It wasn’t always easy. She was often hired more for her looks—she was strikingly attractive—than her talent. “I didn’t care,” she said, “I had a kid to raise.” The affront actually worked to her advantage. Once she was hired, clients in the patrimony didn’t know quite what to do with her, so she enjoyed a certain creative freedom. While she might have danced cat-and-mouse with the Good Ol’ Boys, Bobbie continued to blaze her aesthetic trail unfettered by the prevailing winds of corporate sexism and micromanagement.

Bobbie’s break-out came with her work at the Northern California development, Sea Ranch. It was like a thunder-clap, putting her on the map. Other proj-



Bobbie with her daughter Nellie, granddaughter Fia, and a display of her work. (COURTESY NELLIE KING SOLOMON)

N, NORTH BEACH DESIGN LEGEND



Barbara Solomon in 1955.
(COURTESY OF BAMPPA)

ects followed, but her heart's no longer in it. "It's too easy," she said, "I can draw anything." By the early '70s, now married to Dan Solomon, a successful architect, she shelves the business and returns to school.

"I was married to a man who kept telling me I was stupid," she once confided to an interviewer, "so I went to Berkeley to earn some degrees." That's a bit facile. In Basel, graphic design was taught strictly as a skill, with no regard to theory or history. Skill alone would never be enough, not for her, so she was looking also to fill in the missing pieces. She studies philosophy and history, earning a bachelor's in the latter. A master's in architecture follows and then, for good measure, a Ph.D in linguistics.

A second career in landscape architecture ensued, often in collaboration with Dan until their eventual divorce, though Bobbie lands prestigious commissions on the East Coast and in Europe as well.

The last decade saw a burst of interest in Bobbie and her work in supergraphics. Interview requests and major commissions poured in. When asked to explain it, she simply shrugged, suggesting that perhaps people were just surprised she was still alive. The proffered work was undertaken "to make a buck," though on occasion, she'd been heard to say it's now "fun."

As if moved by the force of her own motifs, Bobbie's work was shunted ever forward by the chevrons iconic of her style, allowing a continuation of form and consistent character that made her an easy winner of lucrative design competitions. This device shows up everywhere over the years, most recently in the SFMOMA commission and in a permanent San Francisco Arts Commission installation coming in 2026 to the Minna Street Gallery south of Market, where the chevrons will take the form of a series of painted ladies' welcoming, can-can legs on one of our



Bobbie with Freddie, a pigeon who befriended her on her deck.

(COURTESY NELLIE KING SOLOMON)

downtown streets named famously and eponymously for a long-departed prostitute.

I asked about Bobbie's presence in the neighborhood. She'd been housebound the past few years though still sharp as the proverbial tack, working on numerous projects. Before that, until around 90, she swam daily at the Presidio YMCA and could be seen walking her Golden Retriever Gus up and down Francisco Street.

She was a lover of all animals in a way that sometimes irked the neighbors. George offered up a photo, adding, "There was a whole flock of wild pigeons living under her roof deck, and one adopted her, sitting with

her and even going inside with her on occasion. She thought of it as a pet, named it 'Freddie.' Once I made the mistake of suggesting the birds needed to go!"

Bobbie and Dan also had a daughter, Nellie King Solomon, who now lives as an artist in Los Angeles, in addition to Chloe, who still resides on Telegraph Hill. At the time of her passing, Bobbie's desk remained busy with papers, inks, contracts, and seven decades of the tools of a trade she shaped to change the world as we interact with it today, every day, whether we know it or not. A sneaky little rebel to the end, her legacy reveals your daily visual life informed by your quiet-yet-bold Hill neighbor, BSS.



Surrounded by her designs.

(COURTESY CHRIS GRUNDER)



SOCIAL & PROGRAMS REPORT

Report and Photos by Kristen Foley, Committee Chair
kristen.foley@thd.org

Telegraph Hill Dwellers members turned out in droves to join us for our annual Spring Meeting on May 7th. We had a sold-out showing of 70+ members, old and new alike. Fior d'Italia, 2237 Mason Street, graciously hosted this event, providing us with impeccable service. Attendees were served a full three-course plated dinner of their choice, selections ranging from Tortellini Con Panna to Pesce del Giorno. Yum! But the food wasn't the only highlight, as members also reveled in our packed program.

John King, the *San Francisco Chronicle's* urban design critic and author of his recently published book, *Portal: San Francisco's Ferry Building and the Reinvention of American Cities*, was the evening's first presenter. King regaled members with the Ferry Building's

THD CELEBRATES AT OUR ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

enchanting history and discussed its fate amid rising seawater levels. Following, listeners were able to engage in a lively and informative Q&A session.

District 3 Supervisor Aaron Peskin presented two awards. The first was for outgoing President Stan Hayes. Stan has led THD as president for five years spread throughout a decade. During his tenure, Stan made countless contributions to the neighborhood. His leadership helped the THD Board navigate important initiatives for our neighbors to keep North Beach/Telegraph Hill thriving and equitable. For Stan's unwavering service, Supervisor Peskin, as President of the Board of Supervisors, declared May 7th "Stan Hayes Day!"

Supervisor Peskin also bestowed the THD Heritage of the Hill Award on Katherine Petrin, architectural historian and preservation planner. Katherine's civic engagement in North Beach and throughout San

Francisco is a much-valued resource in our community. Congratulations to both!

Last, members voted in our 2024-2025 Board slate with resounding approval. With that, we heard from new elected president, Nick Ferris. Nick told us that as someone born and raised in North Beach, he's enthused to take on this new role helping to strengthen our community. We are excited to have him at the helm. Congratulations, Nick!

Regardless of whether you were able to make the Spring Meeting, we can't wait to see you at our next big event. The Telegraph Hill Dwellers turns 70 this year! To celebrate, we will be organizing a jubilee in October at Pioneer Park in coordination with Coit Tower's 90th anniversary. Keep a lookout for details closer to the event. Look forward to seeing you there!



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE THD 2024-2025 BOARD!

Congratulations to the Officers and Directors elected to the THD Board at the Annual Meeting on May 7, 2024.

Officers

President Nick Ferris
Vice President Greg Giachino
Recording Secretary Mary Lipian
Corresponding Secretary ... Katie Hopkins
Treasurer Peter Stevens
Financial Secretary Andy Katz
Historian Nancy Shanahan
Past President Stan Hayes
Semaphor Editor Cap Caplan

Directors 2023 - 2025 (Unexpired Terms)

Greta Alexander
Kristen Foley
*Kim Pendleton
Fran Schreiber

Directors 2024 - 2026

Theresa Flandrich
Nanci Gaglio
*Ian Kloville
Michael Rothmann

*New Board Members



NEW BOARD MEMBER

IAN KLOVILLE

Ian Kloville moved to San Francisco in 1993 and has lived on the western slope of Telegraph Hill since 2006. After a 20-year banking career in the Financial District, he currently has a consulting practice focusing on banking and compliance analytics.

Along with his teenage daughter, who is a proud San Francisco native and lifelong resident of Telegraph Hill, Ian loves this unique neighborhood. He is an avid Giants fan and enjoys golfing, hiking in Marin, and backpacking in the Sierras. You'll find Ian walking the neighborhood most days and striking up a conversation everywhere he goes. Ian wants to use his risk management background to identify metrics that can help THD.



NEW BOARD MEMBER

KIM PENDLETON

Kim joined THD shortly after moving to Telegraph Hill. She fell in love with the neighborhood, recognizing its unique character and rich historical significance. Kim wanted to find ways to participate in the community and meet her neighbors. And there was THD!

Kim has 20 years' experience working in education and nonprofit leadership, most recently with the San Francisco Early Learning Alliance and the Salesians Boys and Girls Club. She and her husband are also small business owners of the Barbary Coast Barber Shop on Grant Avenue. They opened their business in March of this year and have received amazing support and appreciation from THD and the neighborhood.

Kim is passionate about community and finding ways to volunteer, advocate, and work alongside others on projects to sustain our beautiful and vibrant neighborhood.



TRANSPORTATION REPORT

by Howard Wong, AIA, Committee Chair
howard.wong@thd.org

Dominating the News: Transit Agencies Face Financial Disaster

BART'S General Manager announced that the regional rail system was 450 working days from a fiscal cliff—when federal and state funding subsidies run out—portending station closures, line shutdowns, no weekend service, 60-minute train frequencies, mass lay-offs, and more. SF Muni would cut back to pandemic service levels—40% fewer routes, service ending at 10 p.m. and minimal hilltop neighborhood lines. By 2026, huge budget deficits loom for transit agencies: BART \$385 million; MUNI \$214 million; Caltrain \$40 million; and varying sums for others. Budget deficits also loom for city and state governments, making additional public subsidies doubtful.

More than Pandemic Impacts, Transit Economics Have Transformed

Work-at-home and new commute patterns make it unlikely that ridership levels and fare revenue will recover. San Francisco hit 37% office vacancies—with more companies ending leases and subleasing space as remote work is institutionalized. Post-pandemic, BART has recovered only 43% of pre-COVID ridership—a financial blow when 70% fare-box recovery was the pre-pandemic norm. SF Muni has had a 71% ridership recovery, but Muni revenue is 56% of pre-pandemic levels and parking revenue is 12%—worsening a preexisting structural deficit. Region-wide, transit agencies have recovered about 55% ridership.

Money Crisis Led to Refocus on Customer Service—To Regain Trust

Besides greater efficiency and fiscal belt-tightening, transit agencies have gone back-to-basics, focusing on frequency, reliability, safety, and cleanliness. Muni polling shows that people have recognized service improvements, attracting riders back to the system. Five bus lines now exceed their pre-pandemic ridership numbers, including the 22-Fillmore at 138% and the 14R-Mission at 117% of pre-pandemic weekend ridership. BART has campaigned for more non-work trips, weekend excursions, and transport to major events.

Disjointed Regional Transit is Inefficient and Costs More

Compared to regional transit governance models, like in New York City, Toronto, and Switzerland (Zurich), the extent of overlapping Bay Area tran-

TRANSIT FISCAL CLIFFS: YIKES!



Bus at Columbus Avenue and Stockton Street—MUNI has improved service frequency and reliability.

© HOWARD WONG

sit jurisdictions is astounding. THE 9 BAY AREA COUNTIES: Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma—with 7.5 million population and 101 cities/towns. THE 27 BAY AREA TRANSIT AGENCIES: ACE, BART, Caltrain, Read-Ride, CCCTA, ECCTA, FAST, Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District, LAVTA, Marin Transit, NVRTA, Petaluma Transit, Rio Vista Delta Breeze, SamTrans, VTA, Santa Rosa CityBus, SFMTA (Muni), Sonoma County Transit, SMART, SolTrans, Union City Transit, Vacaville City Coach, WETA (SF Bay Ferry), WestCAT, Capitol Corridor, and San Joaquin Rail Service. AND 151 TRANSIT-RELATED PLANNERS AND PROVIDERS: businesses, colleges, government, nonprofits, ride-share, taxis, new technologies, and more.

Great Hope: Regional Transportation Funding Measure Hits Snag

The Bay Area transit funding bill has been paused to resolve disagreements among cities, transit agencies, and stakeholders. Senate Bill (SB) 1031 was enabling legislation for a Regional Transportation Ballot Measure, which would raise \$1 billion a year for transit operations—by means of a sales tax increase.

Although requiring 66.7% voter approval in nine counties, polling shows only 55% current voter support but strong public sentiment for greater coordination/consolidation of the Bay Area's 27 transit agencies. The language of coordination/consolidation and funding allocations/timing are in dispute amongst members of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. Even if passed in the November 2026 election, funding would not flow until 2027—too late to solve imminent transit fiscal cliffs.

All-Hands on Deck: Sustainable Transit Operating Funds

Many transit agencies around the world do receive state/provincial/federal operating subsidies. And California's transit agencies merit annual government funding—as public utilities. By example, two proposed federal bills would authorize new federal formula funds for transit operations. A House bill authorizes \$20 billion per year through 2027. A Senate bill sets no dollar amount and focuses on urban areas. While federal funding already covers capital expenditures (construction, infrastructure, and equipment), transit operations rely on state and/or local funding (as in San Francisco). Although paused, New York City was near implementation of congestion pricing, which charged tolls for cars entering Manhattan—to raise \$1 billion per year and fund \$15 billion in capital projects.

What Could Have Been: Voter Fatigue and Frustrations

Recent polling shows 64% of California's likely voters think it's a bad time for new debt. In March, California Proposition 1 barely passed by a 50.2% vote—despite being perceived as a “sure-thing” to fund homelessness/mental health/housing solutions. Upcoming 2024 SF ballot measures include a \$20 billion Regional Housing Bond, \$790 million SF School Bond, and \$390 million Public Health Bond. Possible 2026 SF measures include a \$400 million SF Muni Bond and \$1 billion (annual) Regional Transportation Tax Measure.

Voters need a transformative vision for effective use of their dollars—not business as usual. The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (Muni) has had billion-dollar operating budgets and billion-dollar capital budgets, spending tens of billions of dollars on projects, only to have declining transit ridership (even before the pandemic). An example of poor investment is the low-ridership Central Subway, whose \$2 billion cost (and \$400 million cost overrun) could have funded and transformed Muni infrastructure/technology throughout the City. Regionally, transit mode share of all trips is a dismal 5%, and only 11% of trips in and out of SF are by public transit, highlighting the need to fund regional transit integration.



Chinatown Bus Stop—When service frequency and reliability drop, ridership tends to drop.

© HOWARD WONG



PARKS & TREES REPORT

by Michael Rothmann, Committee Chair
mike.rothmann@thd.org

For this article, I'd like to take a second to sit on my editorial porch, to look around and write a quick homage to all the beauty of our neighborhood. We've all heard it. North Beach is undergoing a renaissance. Capped by the Italian Festa and the North Beach Festival, our streets and parks have been packed and full of life. Restaurants and parklets are full. The tourists are back, and the cruise ships sail in and out, bringing people who ooh and aah at our gorgeous city. It feels as if our community has become truly vibrant, and the weather has lately felt even more perfect than normal. The air has been fresh and cool, and it seemed like June Gloom was limited only to weekdays this year. The marine layer has continued to keep increasingly hot days at bay while thinning out enough for some rare warm summer nights.

It may be a distant memory now amidst sunny days, but the torrential rains of last winter and the two winters prior have been blessings for California after a long period of drought. For the last three years, seasonal rainfall has hovered around historical averages, and the intermittent and consistent soakings have made the land feel verdant. We are monitoring our new tree plantings and continuing to work with Friends of the Urban Forest to ensure their care and maintenance, but most are thriving and are blooming under the favorable conditions.

On top of THD's own work, a walk around the neighborhood displays the amazing efforts of local gardeners who continue to beautify our walkways with hanging bougainvillea, aromatic Brugmansia (angel trumpets), and many other plants flourishing in our

A BEAUTIFUL YEAR IN NORTH BEACH, TOASTING THE GOOD TIMES



Sea lions crowding Pier 39.

© MICHAEL ROTHMANN

Mediterranean climate. The scent of night-blooming jasmine fills the air, and overflowing planters display every possible kind of succulent with their weird and architecturally spiky flowers. Even the sea lions seem to be attracted to our fair city and have increased their numbers this year, packing the floating docks at Pier 39 until heading en mass to the Channel Islands at the end of June for the mating season.

At the time of this writing, California sits on the precipice of what could be the worst heat wave of the summer, and fire season has already begun. Amidst stressful times, the natural beauty of the bay can serve as a healing refuge. In the months ahead, I, with the Parks

and Trees committee, will continue to be vigilant to make our city a greener and more livable environment, but here's a quick pause in the struggle to remind everyone to listen to the birds, to jump in and feel the freshness of the bay, to eat some ripe cherries or some street plums, and, occasionally, to go the more steep and scenic way around the neighborhood to smell the flowers. Just like a beautiful sunset coming from the smoke of a wildfire, it's important always to be mindful of the plight of others and the challenges in the rest of the world, but just for a second, let's toast our beautiful bubble.

Enjoy the summer, everyone.

Michael



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WATERFRONT REPORT

by Greg Chiampou, Committee Chair
greg.chiampou@thd.org

The economic viability of our waterfront is linked to public benefits such as historic preservation and sea level/seismic adaptation, which in turn support the City’s overall economic recovery. The Bay waterfront, as we now know it, is on a trajectory to look and feel dramatically different.

The San Francisco Port’s management playbook today looks a lot like a Fortune 100’s, given the Port’s scope of assets and the sheer number of new initiatives simultaneously underway across its 7.5-mile waterfront jurisdiction. The Port’s operating portfolio has more than 550 ground, commercial, retail, office, industrial, and maritime industrial leases as well as public parks and landmarks such as the Ferry Building and the San Francisco Giants’ ballpark.

The Port’s agenda includes:

- Large real estate developments, including the Draft Flood Study Plan to build coastal flood defenses between Aquatic Park and Heron’s Head Park (at an estimated cost of \$14 billion) and mixed-use projects along the southern waterfront
- Revitalization and re-tenanting of the Wharf’s numerous empty buildings

The Waterfront Committee here focuses on these two priorities as they play out along the Southern, Northern, and Fisherman’s Wharf corridors.

Southern Waterfront (Bay Bridge to Heron’s Head Park)

- Developing several mixed-use projects, such as in the Mission Rock, Pier 70, Piers 30-32 and Seawall Lot areas
- Strengthening the City’s waterfront edge as a pedestrian/transit/water circulation path and completing the Blue-Greenway, Bay Trail, Bay Area Water Trail, and a waterfront open space system

THD generally supports increasing revenue for the Port’s sustainability, historic preservation, open space, and public benefits. Enhancing the maritime/industrial character of the southern waterfront—through design, occupancies, and uses, and adapting the waterfront to rising sea levels and climate change (including natural systems)—are all to be encouraged. THD also advocates for increased affordable housing and advancing social equity and accessibility, particularly in underserved communities in this area of the waterfront.

THD is represented on the Port’s Southern Advisory Committee.

Embarcadero/Northern Waterfront (Pier 29 to Bay Bridge)

- The Draft Flood Study Plan, released earlier this year by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in collaboration with Port management and City government, recommends substantial changes to the Embarcadero waterfront. These potential impacts would have widely negative consequences for the City’s entire economic fabric, affecting every type of ground transportation, emergency services, office businesses, tourism, *et al*—the reason why the Draft Flood Study Plan recommends starting the Plan’s remediation along the Embarcadero, raising and realigning the Embarcadero roadway, lifting the bulkhead 3.5 feet in many areas, raising the Ferry Building, moving historical piers, and adding additional recreational areas.

- The Ferry Building Plaza Redesign Plan, from the Plaza’s master lease holder, Hudson Pacific, proposes redesigns that will increase commercial space in the Plaza and Ferry Building as well as alter the Ferry Building’s ground floor façade.

THD’s Board has closely monitored both these initiatives from their beginnings, providing both input and formal responses.



REDESIGNING, REHABBING, AND RECONSTRUCTING THE BAY’S WATERFRONT

The Draft Flood Plan, if enacted materially as proposed, would disrupt our own neighborhood during construction for at least a decade—everything from constant pile-driving noise and air pollution to commuter traffic redirection (including into our neighborhoods), loss of local business and tourism activity, and the potential destruction of historical piers. These foreseeable issues need be balanced by the very real threats from future sea level and seismic disasters. The Port and City government have not yet formally addressed the Draft Flood Study Plan but are scheduled to do so by year-end. (See *The Semaphore* Spring 2024.)

THD strongly advocates that the final Flood Study Plan’s redesign address the impacts on our local neighborhood and environment, something the current Plan does not do. THD also supports a nimbler approach to protecting the Embarcadero waterfront: Rather than implementing many permanent and major reconstructions that “could” work, the final proposal might plan for progressive steps that allow for changes when merited either by evolving (and currently unforeseen) environmental circumstances or by future technologies that combat seismic and sea level rise risks.

The Ferry Building Plaza Redesign Plan, as currently proposed, infringes on existing pedestrian walkways and the popular outdoor Farmers Market areas, as well as altering the view of the Ferry Building’s graceful arched windows on the ground floor. THD continues to interact with the Hudson Pacific management team to address our concerns for the Plaza redesign. (Note: Hudson Pacific objects to the Draft Flood Study Plan’s designs for the Embarcadero area, particularly the Plan’s lifting up of the Ferry Building.)

THD’s Board and Waterfront Committee members serve on the Port’s Historic Preservation Technical Advisory Committee as well as on the Port’s Northern and Southern Advisory Committees. THD submitted a formal response letter in March to the Draft Flood Study Plan’s teams and has yet to hear back.

Fisherman’s Wharf Waterfront (Aquatic Park to Pier 29)

- The Fisherman’s Wharf Revitalization LLC’s

Proposal is a private undertaking under consideration by the Port. The proposal envisions redeveloping the “zone area” just west of Pier 39 and calls for a food hall, fish market and seafood processing center, events center, interactive museum, winery and distillery, short-term Airbnb-style apartment rental building, and additional pedestrian walkways. The proposal’s stated intent is to create an enlivened destination that will encourage visitors to spend the entire day at the Wharf and along Jefferson Street.

- Re-tenanting the Wharf’s Empty Buildings: Alioto’s, Castagnola’s, Pompei’s Grotto, Lou’s, and other long-time tenants have recently vacated their Port leases. Empty buildings cast a shadow on the area’s vitality and represent foregone Port revenues.


The Revitalization LLC’s proposal, while still evolving, would require Board of Supervisors’ approval. (See *The Semaphore* Winter 2024.) One common public comment is that the proposal’s offerings should maintain overall “authenticity,” recognizing the area’s history as a commercial fishing, boating, and seafood hub for locals, fishermen, and tourists alike and not pursue “Disneyfication” of the area or disconnect from the surrounding Wharf area. THD continues to monitor this proposal’s evolution and has advocated for wider public disclosure of the proposal’s evolving design plans.

The Port has (unusually) engaged a commercial broker to help re-tenant several of the Wharf’s larger empty buildings. Much of the Fisherman’s Wharf Advisory Committee meetings (in which THD participates) focus on reinvigorating the Wharf’s flailing “Zone” (between Pier 39 and Aquatic Park) to re-establish the Wharf area as a “whole afternoon” destination. Many on the Committee are looking to capitalize further on the area’s natural attractions for visitors with children, such as Aquatic Park and barking sea lions, by creating family-friendly exhibits and features.

Contact us at hello@thd.org to get involved in advocating for our neighborhood’s interests while balancing the benefits of Port and Bay waterfront developments. The city’s coastline and natural beauty are what make our urban area special, and the Bay’s waterfront future is evidently now.



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ART & CULTURE REPORT

by Nanci Gaglio, Committee Chair
nanci.gaglio@thd.org

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 21

Yggdrasill Whose Roots Are Stars in the Human Mind
by Stan Brakhage. 16mm film projection.
Chinese Series by Stan Brakhage.
Bruce Conner's *Crossroads*.
Beat Museum, 540 Broadway. 6 p.m.

The Third Man by Carol Reed.
Professor Seagull's Smartshop, 1351 Grant Avenue. 7 p.m.

Tribute to San Francisco Poets Neeli Cherkovski and

—FILMS WITH FRIENDS— UPCOMING SCREENINGS

Jack Hirschman. Featuring Poetry Readings by Agneta Falk, Bobby Coleman, and Scott Bird. Clips of Jack Hirschman reading his poetry.
It's Nice to Be With You, Always, documentary by Kyle Harvey.
The Savoy Tivoli, 1434 Grant Avenue. 7:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

8 short films by Hans Richter. 16mm film projection.
Ménilmontant by Dimitri Kisanov.
Beat Museum, 540 Broadway. 7 p.m.

Metropolis by Fritz Lang.
Professor Seagull's Smartshop, 1351 Grant Avenue. 7 p.m.

Found footage presentation by Rick Prelinger.
The Savoy Tivoli, 1434 Grant Avenue. 7:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16

Killer Klowns from Outer Space with Harrod Blank and Mike Martinez.
The Savoy Tivoli, 1434 Grant Avenue. 7:30 p.m.

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BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS APRIL – JUNE 2024

by Mary Lipian, Recording Secretary
mary.lipian@thd.org

April 2024

The five-member Nominating Committee consisting of Greg Giachino, Nancy Shanahan, Peter Stevens, Stan Hayes, Greta Alexander, and ex-officio member Cap Caplan presented the proposed slate of Officers and Directors for 2024-2025.

The Board thanked Al Fontes and Nadya Williams for their outstanding and generous contributions to THD.

Kristen Foley, THD's Social & Programs Chair, discussed a possible May date and place for THD's Annual General Meeting during which the membership will vote upon the slate.

May 2024

Note: THD's Annual General Membership Meeting and Election was held on May 7, 2024, at Fior D'Italia. The 2024-2025 Board of Directors was elected unanimously.

THD's May Board meeting was held on May 14, 2024. The Board welcomed new Board Members Kim Pendleton and Ian Klovile and established the five-person Executive Committee for the 2024-2025 year: President Nick Ferris, Vice President Greg Giachino, Treasurer Peter Stevens, Historian Nancy Shanahan, and Past President Stan Hayes.

The Board approved the continuation of two Special Committees: Art & Culture and Oral History.

June 2024

The June Board meeting was held in person for the first time since the beginning of the pandemic.

Tito Avila, a representative from The Savoy Tivoli, met with the Board of Directors via Zoom about its proposal that would change Savoy's ABC License to remove current restrictions disallowing DJ and karaoke. Tito claimed that offering DJ music would more easily allow control of the decibel level.

The Board expressed its general support of the request, contingent upon Tito's commitment to control the noise level and agreement not to add an outdoor parklet.

Films with Friends Series 2 will begin on June 19th with *Carol Doda Topless at the Condor* at The Savoy Tivoli. THD will continue to fund the printing of posters advertising the film series.

The Board discussed plans for the annual North Beach Festival to be held on June 15th and June 16th. Greg Giachino is coordinating the schedule for shifts to cover the THD booth. THD will sell memberships, books, tee shirts, and sweatshirts.



by Peter Stevens
peter.stevens@thd.org

TREASURER'S REPORT

Hello, Telegraph Hill Dwellers members. I am honored to serve as your new treasurer. My priority is to expand our financial capacity to meet all of our neighborhood ambitions. Our Art & Culture and Social & Programs Committees are working on programming like Films with Friends, First Fridays, and community get-togethers and planning events like our 70th anniversary celebration. Our Parks & Trees Committee will continue our neighborhood beautification efforts by planting more trees and tending to our parks. The Oral History project continues to document the history of the Hill. This is just a small sample of the great work we all participate in together.

I welcome THD members to contact me with any ideas to help us expand our financial reach and resources. The options are clear in the abstract: fundraising (selling more merch, making donation appeals, encouraging gifts in estate planning, seeking city, state, federal, or private grants), membership drives, investment of monies on hand, and careful scrutiny of current spending.

What we need, however, are opportunities and strategies for implementing some of these. We are starting off the fiscal year with a healthy balance sheet, but this is an ambitious group, and we want to make sure the only thing that limits us is our imagination.



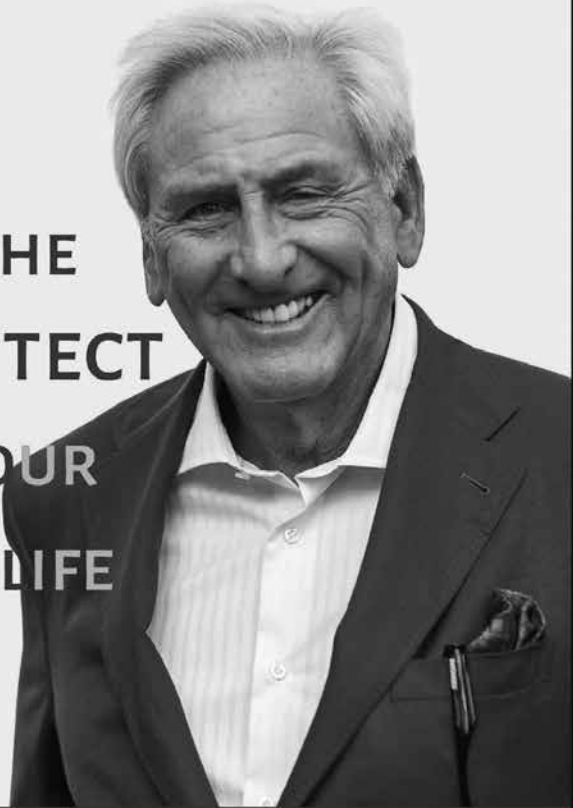
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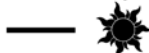
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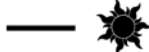
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Vice President: Greg Giachino
Recording Secretary: Mary Lipian
Corresponding Secretary: Katie Hopkins
Treasurer: Peter Stevens
Financial Secretary/Membership: Andy Katz
Historian: Nancy Shanahan
Past President: Stan Hayes
The Semaphore Editor: Cap Caplan

DIRECTORS

Term: 2023-2025

Greta Alexander
Kristen Foley
Fran Schreiber
*Kim Pendleton

Term: 2024-2026

Theresa Flandrich
Nanci Gaglio
*Ian Klovile
Michael Rothmann

THD COMMITTEES NEED YOU

Get involved in our neighborhood and make a difference! Join a THD committee and help keep the Hill a special place to live.

STANDING COMMITTEES

Budget: Peter Stevens peter.stevens@thd.org
Membership: Andy Katz THDmembership@gmail.com
Oral History Project Manager: John Doxey oralhistory@thd.org
Parks & Trees: Michael Rothmann michael.rothmann@thd.org
Planning & Zoning: Stan Hayes, Nancy Shanahan, and Mary Lipian PZ@thd.org
The Semaphore: Cap Caplan (Editor) semaphore@thd.org
David Lipkin (Photo Editor) david.lipkin@thd.org
Social & Programs (Dinners): Kristen Foley social@thd.org
Social & Programs (Events): Greta Alexander and Kim Pendleton social@thd.org
Transportation: Howard Wong howard.wong@thd.org
Waterfront: Greg Chiampou waterfront@thd.org

SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Art & Culture: Nanci Gaglio nanci.gaglio@thd.org
Communications: Al Fontes al.fontes@thd.org

LIAISONS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Central Police District Community Advisory Board: Daryl Babbitt
Coalition for San Francisco Neighborhoods: Al Fontes
Friends of Washington Square: Michael Rothmann
Northern Advisory Committee Member: Stan Hayes



WELCOMING NEW MEMBERS!

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Membership includes:

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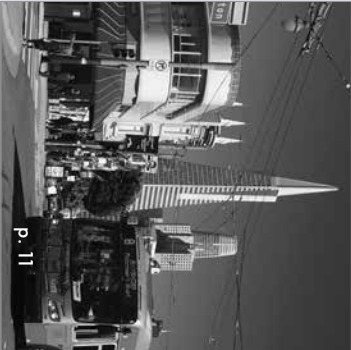
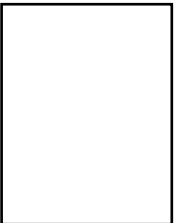
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THE SEMAPHORE

#246 Summer 2024

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